

How Meth Affects Your Community

Meth Fact Sheet

Meth can cause harm not only to those who are addicted to the drug, but their family, friends and neighbors too. Here are a few ways meth can cause harm .

Environmental Harm

A meth lab can operate unnoticed in any neighborhood for years, causing serious health hazards to everyone around. For each pound of meth produced, five to six pounds of hazardous waste are generated, posing immediate and long-term environmental health risks. The chemicals used to make meth are toxic, and “meth cooks” routinely dump waste into streams, rivers, fields, backyards and sewage systems, which can in turn contaminate water resources for humans and animals. Chlorinated solvents and other toxic by-products used to make meth pose long-term hazards because they can persist in soil and groundwater for years.

Also, the poisonous vapors produced during cooking permeate the halls and carpets of houses and buildings, often making them uninhabitable. Cleaning up these sites requires specialized training and costs an average of \$2,000-\$4,000 per site.

If you have questions about environmental contamination from an illegal lab, contact your state’s department of ecology office.

Puts Children at Risk

Hundreds of children are neglected every year after living with parents who are meth cooks. Children who reside in or near meth labs are at a great risk of being harmed from the explosive nature of the ingredients and by products as well as from the noxious fumes which can cause brain damage. Cooking meth is extremely dangerous, and labs often catch on fire and explode. A child living inside could overdose from meth left out by parents, suffer from attachment disorders or behavioral problems, be malnourished, physically or sexually abused and/or burned or fatally injured from a fire or explosion.

Orphaned Children

The number of foster care children has been rising rapidly in states that have been hit hardest by meth. Children whose parents have been using or making meth, are placed in foster homes, crowding an already overflowing system with limited resources. These children often have behavioral problems due to the neglectful conditions in which they've been living. The influx of cases has been overwhelming social workers, leaving them desperate for help.

HIV/AIDS

While high on meth, users can feel hypersexual and uninhibited, often forgetting to use protection. Also, since meth can be administered intravenously some users opt for dirty needles. These acts of carelessness can lead to the transmission of serious and deadly diseases, such as hepatitis, HIV and AIDS.

Hospitals and Burn Units

Meth production is a dangerous and illegal business that takes place in living spaces — from kitchens to basements to hotel rooms. The materials that are used to produce the drug are toxic and often flammable and any mistakes can result in an explosion or injury to not just the meth cook, but their families as well. These chemical burns are tough to treat and extremely expensive. Much of the care in these specialized units goes uncompensated, which puts a great financial strain on the hospitals and state medical programs.

Crime

Meth labs along with the selling of the drug can breed crime, including burglaries, thefts and even murder. Both teenagers and adults addicted to the drug and who have no income to pay for their habit, may steal valuables from their own homes or even their friends' homes. High on meth, there's no telling what a person would do if provoked — people have been killed for not owing up to a drug payment or coming through on a transaction. This type of crime requires a great deal of attention from the police, for which a town may not have the funding or the resources to spare.

For facts about meth use, please refer to the **FACTS ABOUT METH** fact sheet